

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, MA, US

SUBJECT: MALAGASY GOVERNMENT REQUESTS PL-480 TITLE I AGREE-
MENT FOR 50,000 TONS OF RICE

1. MALAGASY MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT RAJAONAH SUMMONED
CHARGE TO HIS OFFICE APRIL 13. RAJAONAH SAID THAT PRESIDENT
RATSIRAKA REFERRED TO HIS MEETING APRIL 10 WITH CHARGE AND
INSTRUCTED RAJAONAH TO REQUEST 50,000 TONS OF PL-480 RICE
THIS YEAR. (AT MY MEETING WITH RATSIRAKA, HE REFERRED IN
PASSING TO LAST YEAR'S ABORTED PL-480 RICE AGREEMENT WHICH
WAS UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE OF BAN ON MALAGASY RICE EXPORTS.)

2. ACCORDING TO MINISTER, 1975-76 RICE HARVEST IS PROVING
TO BE LESS THAN ANTICIPATED OWING TO DROUGHT IN SOME OF THE
COUNTRY'S RICE-GROWING REGIONS. HE HAD PREDICTED THIS
PROBLEM WHEN WE MET WITH HIM SEVERAL WEEKS AGO BUT HE DID
NOT MENTION ASSISTANCE AT THAT TIME. HE DID NOT SUPPLY
PRECISE PRODUCTION ESTIMATES, BUT SAID HE WOULD DO SO IF
NEEDED. STRESSING URGENCY OF REQUEST, RAJAONAH SAID GDRM
WOULD LIKE RICE TO ARRIVE IN PERIOD JULY-SEPTEMBER 1976.

3. REFERRING TO DRAFT PL-480 TITLE I AGREEMENT NEGOTIATED
WITH GDRM IN APRIL 1975 BUT NOT SIGNED, RAJAONAH SAID GDRM
ALSO STRONGLY REQUESTS EXEMPTION FROM BAN ON EXPORTS OF
DELUXE RICE CONTAINED IN LAST YEAR'S DRAFT AGREEMENT. (DEPART-
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MENT WILL RECALL THAT BAN ON EXPORTS OF RICE WAS AN

IMPORTANT REASON GIVEN BY MALAGASY FOR DECLINING TO SIGN PL-480 AGREEMENT LAST YEAR.) OTHERWISE, RAJAONAH INDICATED GDRM FINDS TERMS OF 1975 DRAFT AGREEMENT SATISFACTORY. HE ASKED IF WE COULD RESPOND "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."

4. CHARGE REPLIED THAT MALAGASY REQUEST FOR PL-480 PROGRAM WOULD BE FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON, STRESSING THAT PROVISION OF RICE DEPENDS ON AVAILABILITY OF COMMODITIES AND A NUMBER OF OTHER FACTORS EMBASSY IS NOT IN A POSITION TO ASSESS.

5. DEPT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER GDRM'S REQUEST IN TERMS OF ITS HUMANITARIAN ASPECT AND THAT WE MAY NOT WANT TO REBUFF RATSIRAKA WHO IS ASKING SOMETHING OF US FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE CLOSED THE NASA STATION LAST JULY. HAVING CONDEMNED THE UNDESIRABLE ASPECTS OF LAST YEAR'S UNSIGNED PL-480 AGREEMENT, HE IS EATING SOME OF HIS WORDS BY MAKING THIS REQUEST. PRESUMABLY, OUR DECISION TO NEGOTIATE NEW AGREEMENT WOULD REQUIRE WAIVER OF RICE EXPORT BAN WHICH WE BELIEVE IS POSSIBLE UNDER PL-480 PROGRAM. IF WE GET INFORMAL GO-AHEAD FROM DEPT, WE PLAN TO CHECK OUT MALAGASY RICE EXPORT SITUATION TO CONFIRM THEIR CLAIMS THAT THEIR RICE EXPORTS (ACCORDING TO RAJAONAH, NOW AT 9,000-TON ANNUAL LEVEL) IS OF VARIETY OF RICE NOT CONSUMED HERE AND IS DESTINED FOR TRADITIONAL SUPPLIERS.

6. IN VIEW CURRENT STATE MALAGASY-US RELATIONS, WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS ON THIS REQUEST BEFORE WE SEND CABLE WHICH WOULD BE CIRCULATED TO OTHER INTERESTED AGENCIES. IF PL-480 AGREEMENT NOT POSSIBLE, COULD DEPARTMENT SUGGEST SOME ALTERNATIVE FOR SALE OF US RICE ON CREDIT. SHEINBAUM

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